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Randall L. Schweller^a

^a Assistant professor in the Department of Political Science, Ohio State University
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NEOREALISM'S STATUS-QUO BIAS: WHAT SECURITY DILEMMA?

RANDALL L. SCHWELLER

G. K. CHESTERTON'S classic spy novel, *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908), centers on a secret society of seven revolutionaries, known as the Central Anarchist Council, sworn to destroy the world. For security reasons, the anarchists call themselves by the names of the days of the week—Sunday, Monday, and so on. As the plot unfolds, we learn that all of the anarchists, with the exception of Sunday, are actually undercover agents working for the ultrasecret New Detective Corps organized by Scotland Yard to overthrow the Anarchist Council. The Corps is so shadowy that none of its agents knows of the others' true identities or purposes. The story ends when Sunday, the lone anarchist and mastermind of the Council, manages to escape the pursuit of Scotland Yard by revealing that he, too, is not who or what he appears to be; in fact, he is not even human: "[Sunday's face] grew larger and larger, filling the whole sky; then everything went black."¹ In the end, anarchy triumphs; mere mortals, no matter how rational they may be, cannot transcend their wretched condition and secure a reassuring world of order and safety.

Chesterton's surrealistic story serves as a good metaphor for structural realism. Just as six of the Council members prove to be law-enforcers in anarchists' clothing fighting a nonexistent (non-human, at least) threat, neorealist states are all security-maximizers, who, because they exist under anarchy, sometimes act like aggressors, though none has any interest in non-security expansion. Also, just as in Chesterton's tale there is no concrete anarchist society, only the inextinguishable threat of anarchy, in neorealism, insecurity is caused not by greedy actors but by the inescapable self-help nature of the system.

Randall L. Schweller is assistant professor in the Department of Political Science, Ohio State University.

1. G. K. Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare* (London: Penguin Books, [1908], 1986), 183.

In Chesterton's story, the joke is that the evil Central Anarchist Council is the creation of Scotland Yard (except for Sunday). Yet, is not neorealism's perspective on world politics similar? It, too, describes a world of all cops and no robbers, that is, all security-seeking states and no aggressors. Kenneth Waltz, the father of neorealism, claims: "Balance-of-power politics prevail whenever two, and only two, requirements are met: that the order be anarchic and that it be populated by units wishing to survive."² The puzzle is: If states are assumed to seek nothing more than their own survival, why would they feel threatened? Why would they engage in balancing behavior? In a hypothetical world that has never experienced crime, the concept of security is meaningless.

Waltz's statement makes sense if, and only if, we assume the prior existence of a threat. Otherwise, the need for security never arises in the first place. What triggers security dilemmas under anarchy is the possibility of predatory states existing among the ranks of the units the system comprises. Anarchy and self-preservation alone are not sufficient to explain the war of all against all or, more specifically, why states should balance rather than bandwagon, and why they should be concerned about relative, not absolute, gains and losses.³

Yet, neorealists posit that "the ultimate concern of states is not for power but for security,"⁴ that is, states seek maximum security not maximum power. By this claim, contemporary realists ignore the very states that activate the systems and behaviors they seek to explain. Aside from the goal of self-preservation, the objectives of the actors, whether they seek to maintain or overthrow the status quo, is of no importance to neorealists—though it was of great importance to traditional realists, such as Carr and Morgenthau. Theories of international politics that include only unit-level attributes as causal variables, Waltz charges, are reductionist.

Treated as "like units" wishing to survive, the states in Waltz's theory may seek power for self-preservation or world dominion. According to neorealist logic, however, these unit-level variations do not affect the stability of multipolar or bipolar systems, the formation of balances of power,

2. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 121.

3. Francis Fukuyama makes a similar point: "There is absolutely no reason to assume that any state in an anarchic international order should feel threatened by another state, unless one had reason to think that human societies were inherently aggressive." Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 254–55. I am grateful to Pascal Vennesson for this insight.

4. Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory," in Robert I. Rotberg and Theodore K. Rabb, eds., *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 40.

the intensity of the security dilemma, or the relative-gains problem for international cooperation. For instance, Waltz says, "In an anarchic domain, a state of war exists if all parties lust for power. So too, however, will a state of war exist if all states seek only to ensure their own safety."⁵ By excluding unit-level attributes from his causal scheme, Waltz carefully resists the seductive "urge to reduce."⁶ Unfortunately, structure alone, defined as the number of great powers and the anarchic order, cannot account for the outcomes and behaviors Waltz claims to explain.

In this essay I argue that neorealism overlooks the importance of revisionist goals (nonsecurity expansion) as the driving force—indeed, the *sine qua non*—behind most of its theoretical concepts. In an effort to deemphasize state interests, structural realists have adopted, perhaps unwittingly, a status-quo (or security) bias in their explanations of international politics. As a result, neorealist arguments about relative versus absolute gains, the security dilemma, and balancing versus bandwagoning behavior are not only misleading, but they cannot be logically deduced from the theory's assumption of security-seeking units. To redress this error, neorealists must bring the revisionist state back in. This means that, as in classical realism, differences in state goals—whether states seek the minimum power required for security or additional power for goals other than security—have to be accorded an equal consideration along with anarchy and the distribution of capabilities.

THE EVOLUTION OF STATE INTEREST IN REALIST THEORY

AS A SYSTEMIC or third-image theory of international politics, realism must posit some general assumption about the interests of states. Otherwise, it would not be possible to assess the international system's causal impact—the degree to which structure shapes, shoves, and constrains states—on the observed outcomes one is trying to explain. Not surprisingly, the notion of the "true interest" of states has gone through various stages in the theory's historical development. This section traces this evolution of state interest in realist theory from its initial assumption of greed during the era of power politics, to cultural hegemony in the early nineteenth century, to living space in the late nineteenth century, to revisionist

5. Ibid., 44.

6. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 19.

and conservative forces in the early postwar period, to its present emphasis on security.

CLASSICAL REALISM

The late eighteenth century saw the birth of what is known as the school of the "the doctrine of the interests of states." During this golden age of power politics, scholars of classical realism argued that the true interest of states was to be found in a continual striving for greater power and expansion.

These writers coolly acknowledged that a brutal struggle for power determined the relationship between states. Each state would expand until its advances were halted by counterpressure....The aim of diplomacy was to evaluate correctly the interplay of opposing forces and interests and to create a constellation favorable to conquest and expansion.⁷

This characterization of states as greedy, power-maximizers can be traced to Machiavelli's concept of *ambizione*, by which he meant a striving for self-advancement at the expense of others.⁸ In chapter 3 of *Il Principe*, Machiavelli says: "The desire to acquire possessions is a very natural and ordinary thing, and when those men do it who can do so successfully, they are always praised and not blamed, but when they cannot and yet want to do so at all costs, they make a mistake deserving of great blame. If France, therefore, with her own forces could have taken Naples, she ought to have done so; if she could not, she ought not to have shared it [with Spain]."⁹

While condemning domestic or internal *ambizione* because it seeks to benefit the individual at the expense of the public good, Machiavelli approved of external *ambizione*. Wars of expansion, when successful, improve the general welfare of the conquering state.¹⁰ Consistent with this notion, Machiavelli discounted moral principles and the concept of a universal common good in the context of foreign affairs; international relations is too

7. Felix Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address: Ideas of Early American Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 95–96. This view of great-power diplomacy as an exercise in greedy self-aggrandizement is a fairly accurate picture of state interests during the pre-Napoleonic era, when war could be called the sport of kings and military logistics confined wartime operations "to a scale that did not require the enthusiasm of a multitude." Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 27–28.

8. For a full treatment of this subject, see Russell Price, "Ambizione in Machiavelli's Thought," *History of Political Thought* 3, no. 3 (winter 1982): 383–445.

9. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince and The Discourses* (New York: Random House, 1950), 13.

10. Price, "Ambizione In Machiavelli's Thought," 430.

serious a business to entertain any form of voluntary self-limitation on the use of force. This is the essence of "power politics," translated from the German *Machtpolitik*, meaning "the politics of force—the conduct of international relations by force or the threat of force, without consideration of right or justice."¹¹

THE ORGANIC STATE: THE CLASH OF CULTURAL IDEAS

The work of the French philosopher M. Victor Cousin typifies the positivistic science and rational inquiry that flourished in the early nineteenth century. In a series of lectures entitled "Course of the History of Modern Philosophy" delivered in Paris in the years 1828–29,¹² Cousin claimed to make history intelligible by combining geological and biological laws in a teleological "system" of evolutionary progressive change.¹³ Cousin went so far as to challenge the gallery of two thousand auditors to give him "the map of a country, its configuration, its climate, its waters, its winds, its natural productions, its botany, its zoology, and all its physical geography, and I pledge myself to tell you what will be the man of this country, and what place this country will occupy in history."¹⁴

Likening nations to organisms, Cousin suggested that every state represents a unique idea and

war is nothing else than the violent encounter, the concussion of the exclusive ideas of different nations, in this concussion, the idea which shall be most feeble will be destroyed by the strongest, that is, will be absorbed by it;...[The] nation which represents the idea most in accordance with the general spirit of the epoch, is the nation called to dominion. When the idea of a nation has served its time, this nation disappears; but it does not easily give up its place, it is necessary that another nation should dispute with it its place, and should wrest its place from it; hence war.¹⁵

11. Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, ed. Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1978), 29.

12. M. Victor Cousin, *The Course of Modern Philosophy*, vol. 1, trans. O. W. Wight (New York: D. Appleton, 1852).

13. "History is not an anomaly in the general order," he argued, "it is verifiable in all its degrees by all the degrees of universal existence, as these degrees are verifiable by one another." *Ibid.*, 163.

14. *Ibid.*, 168.

15. *Ibid.*, 183.

Anticipating the work of Robert Gilpin, Paul Kennedy, and George Modelski,¹⁶ Cousin declared:

Every truly historical nation has an idea to realize; and when it has sufficiently realized it at home, it exports it in some way by war, it causes it to make the tour of the world; every civilization which advances, advances by conquest. Every historical nation is, therefore, for some time, engaged in conquests; then, after having been engaged in conquests, after having entirely displayed itself, after having shown and given to the world all that was in it, after having played its part and fulfilled its destiny, it exhausts itself, it has served its time, it is itself conquered; at that time it quits the stage of the world, and philosophy of history abandons it, because it has become useless to humanity.¹⁷

These last words echo the thoughts of Johann Gottfried von Herder in his celebrated work, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (1800): "Nations flourish and decay; but in a faded nation no new flower...ever blooms."¹⁸ In Herder's *Ideen*, "the history of mankind is pictured as a series of national organisms....After a period of growth, each national organism matures, makes its contribution to the general scheme of things and then sinks into senility, making way for others which pass through the same cycle."¹⁹ Viewing nations as complex "genetic individuals" endowed with a unique "personality," Herder conceptualized the state as a unitary rational actor with an autonomous will of its own²⁰—an assumption that has since become a fixture of modern realism.

Hegel, too, strove to demonstrate that "a nation consists on the one hand of distinct moments which combine to give it its general character; on the other, it also embodies the opposite principle of individuality, and these

16. Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987); George Modelski, "The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation-State," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, no. 2 (April 1978): 214–38.

17. Cousin, *History of Modern Philosophy*, 191. Recently, the notion of cultural hegemony as a driving force in world politics has been revisited by Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (summer 1993): 22–49.

18. Quoted in Philip L. Nicoloff, *Emerson on Race and History: An Examination of English Traits* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 69.

19. Robert Reinhold Ergang, *Herder and the Foundations of German Nationalism* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), 85. For a good discussion of Herder's concept of the *volk*-state or "organic" nation-state, see F. M. Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought: From Enlightenment to Nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), chaps. 3–5.

20. For a collection of Herder's political works, see J. G. Herder on *Social and Political Culture*, ed. F. M. Barnard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

two principles together constitute the reality of the Idea."²¹ Like Herder and Cousin, Hegel claimed that the true interest of the state is to expand the unique "Idea" it represents to encompass, if possible, the whole of humanity. As Palan and Blair assert: "In the Hegelian system, the state represents a particular moment in the development of world spirit. At this juncture the state is universalized on the stage of world history by providing a more coherent and rational ordering of society."²²

While he did not glorify war, Hegel believed that it performed a necessary function in the perfection of the state:

War is not to be regarded as an absolute evil...by its agency...the ethical health of the peoples is preserved in their indifference to the stabilization of finite institutions; just as the blowing of the winds preserves the sea from foulness which would be the result of a long calm, so also corruption in nations would be the result of prolonged, let alone 'perpetual' peace.²³

Constant competition among states and their respective modes of social organization serves to advance all domestic institutions by providing a yardstick by which societies can measure their own internal coherence and rationality. For this reason, war has a teleological and beneficial impact on the internal workings of the state and the creation of universal history.

GEOPOLITICS AND SOCIAL DARWINISM

In the 1880s a school of German theorists established a new discipline called *geopolitik*, which applied the principles of geography and political science to the study of the global distribution of political power. In the words of Karl Haushofer, "Geopolitics is the scientific foundation of the art of political action in the life-and-death struggle of state organisms for *Lebensraum*."²⁴ Asserting that a state's power and wealth derive from its geographical size, these theorists predicted that the great powers of the future

21. Georg Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (London: Oxford University Press, [1821], 1967), 76.

22. Ronen P. Palan and Brook M. Blair, "On the Idealist Origins of the Realist Theory of International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 19, no. 4 (October 1993), 393.

23. Quoted in Constance I. Smith, "Hegel on War," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 26, no. 2 (April-June 1965), 282. This passage calls to mind Mancur Olson's views about the negative effects of peace and stability on economic growth. See Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

24. Quoted in Hans W. Weigert, *Generals and Geographers: The Twilight of Geopolitics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942), 14.

would be those states that had acquired enough territory and raw materials to achieve economic self-sufficiency.²⁵

The foundation for geopolitics had been laid by social Darwinism, a creed that preached the singular importance of the "struggle" itself as the sole mechanism of racial progress and evolution. While contemporary realists define state interest in terms of the defense of vital interests, social Darwinists asserted that success in conflict, regardless of the intrinsic importance of the actual bone of contention, was all that mattered. "To shrink or withdraw from a struggle was therefore, if possible, even more fatal to a nation than to be vanquished. It amounted to a public confession of irredeemable decadence."²⁶ Seen in this light, the primary goal of the state is to engage in conflict for territorial expansion, and the entire earth is a vast arena of great-power competition for control of economically valuable resources, territory, and populations.

Geopoliticians claim to have discovered a "super-science" that uncovers natural laws regarding the relationship between territorial space and history, but the scientific merits of geopolitics are dubious at best. Attacking this school, W. R. Keylor observes that geopolitics' "most reputable practitioners employed its teachings to form an ideological apologia for their own nations' right to expand and subjugate."²⁷

Still, the new discipline of geopolitics was not a revolution in the study of international relations but rather a natural progression in the nineteenth-century world of ideas; a continuation of that era's unyielding faith in scientific positivism, rationalism, teleology, prediction, and theories of geological, biological, and historical determinism.

Influenced by Herder and Hegel, as well as others like them who believed in the periodicity of history (for example, Schiller, Fichte, Novalis, F. Schlegel, Schelling, Carlyle, Goethe),²⁸ a generation of German economists, historians, and geographers expounded "theorems in which the old European system of states was replaced by a new system of world states with

25. At a more general level, geopolitics attempts to predict the future of global change by "linking all historical development with the conditions of space and soil, and by regarding history itself as determined by these eternal forces..." Ibid., 15.

26. G. N. Sanderson, "The European Partition of Africa: Coincidence or Conjunction?" *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 3, no. 1 (October 1974), 43. Also see William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902*, 2nd ed. (New York: Knopf, 1965), 85-96; and Woodruff D. Smith, *Politics and the Sciences of Culture in Germany, 1840-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

27. William R. Keylor, *The Twentieth-Century World: An International History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 29.

28. For a brief discussion of these theorists' thoughts on the periodicity of history, see Charles Frederick Harrold, *Carlyle and German Thought: 1819-1834* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), chap. 6.

different orders of magnitude.”²⁹ Geopolitics, with its emphasis on the geographical size of the state, was a natural outgrowth of the widespread fear among nineteenth-century Europeans that their divided continent would inevitably decline relative to the two continental-sized titans, Russia and the United States.³⁰

POSTWAR REALISM

After liberal idealism’s brief reign during the interwar period, the end of the Second World War ushered in the reemergence of power politics as the dominant perspective in international relations. Unlike eighteenth-century power politics, however, postwar realists relaxed the prior assumption that all states are motivated by the pursuit of power and expansion. For these realists, the distribution of relative capabilities, while important, was only one factor among others affecting system stability. Equally important, they believed, are the goals to which those capabilities or influence are put to use: whether power and influence is used to manage the system or destroy it; whether the intention is to threaten other states or to make them feel more secure. For this reason, they deliberately divided states into two categories: Hans Morgenthau called them imperialistic and status-quo powers; Frederick Schuman employed the terms sated and unsatiated powers; Henry Kissinger referred to revolutionary and status-quo states; E. H. Carr distinguished satisfied from dissatisfied powers; Johannes Mattern divided the world into “have” and “have-nots,” and Arnold Wolfers referred to status quo and revisionist states.³¹

29. Fritz Fischer, *War of Illusions: German Policies from 1911 to 1914* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), 30.

30. Concerns over the growth in American and Russian power also gave rise to the Imperial Federation movement (1870–94) in Great Britain. In numerous pamphlets, speeches, and articles, this school of British thought, which included James A. Froude, J. R. Seeley, and Sir Charles Dilke (the so-called triumvirate of mid-Victorian imperialism), warned of the grave geopolitical implications of Russian and American growth. See J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971); Sir Charles Dilke, *Problems of Greater Britain* (New York: Macmillan, 1890); and James Anthony Froude, *Oceana: or England and Her Colonies* (London: Longman, Green, 1894); C. A. Bodelsen, *Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1924), 79–214; J. E. Tyler, *The Struggle for Imperial Unity, 1868–1895* (London: Longman, Green, 1938). For a French view of the danger to Europe posed by the growth in Russian and American power, see Henri Martin, *La Russie et l’Europe* (Paris: Furne, Jouvet, 1866), esp. 316–17.

31. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1948), chaps. 2, 3, 9, and 10; Frederick L. Schuman, *International Politics: The Destiny of the Western State System*, 4th ed. (New York: MacGraw-Hill, 1948), 377–80; Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis: 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (New York: Harper & Row, 1946); Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored: Castlereagh, Metternich, and the Problem of Peace, 1812–22* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957); Johannes Mattern,

While they referred to these two types of states in various ways, postwar realists agreed that states differ along two dimensions: the goals they pursue and the power required to achieve those goals. These unit-level variations were considered an essential element in the construction of a theory of international politics.³² Status-quo powers, according to these theorists, seek self-preservation and the protection of values they already possess. On the relationship between power and self-preservation, Wolfers writes:

Self-preservation calls forth...a variety of attitudes toward power because countries which are satisfied to let things stand as they are have no immediate incentive for valuing power or for wishing to enhance it. Whether they become interested in power at all, and the extent to which they do, depends on the actions they expect from others. It is a responsive interest which takes its cue from the threats, real or imagined, directed at things possessed and valued. If policy is rationally decided, the quest for power here increases or decreases in proportion to these external threats.³³

Because status-quo states value what they possess more than what they covet, they maximize security not power. Most important, status-quo states do not employ military means to extend their values.

In contrast, the aim of revisionist states, Wolfers argues, is "self-extension," which often requires power enhancement:

Goals of self-extension generally place an extremely high premium on the resort to power as a means. The chances of bringing about any major change in the international status quo by means other than power or even violence are slim indeed. Because it is also true that self-extension is often sought passionately if not fanatically and by actors of various sorts of motivations, the tendency is toward frequent and intensive quests for enhanced power by nations belonging to this category.³⁴

Geopolitics: Doctrine of National Self-Sufficiency and Empire (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1942); Arnold Wolfers, "The Balance of Power in Theory and Practice," in Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), 125–26.

32. Of course, one could construct a systemic theory to explain these unit-level variations. Gilpin's *War and Change in World Politics* is a good example of a systemic theory that explains why some states are revisionist and others are status quo. When institutional arrangements or prestige in the system no longer reflect the actual distribution of capabilities, a rising but dissatisfied challenger will unleash a hegemonic war in an attempt to overthrow the status-quo order and construct a new order that more accurately reflects the existing power in the system.

33. Arnold Wolfers, "The Pole of Power and the Pole of Indifference," in Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration*, 97.

34. *Ibid.*, 95.

Revisionist states tend to value what they covet more than what they currently possess, though this ratio may vary considerably among their ranks, and they will not hesitate to employ military force to destroy the existing arrangement among states.

What is particularly important to the present argument is that postwar realists viewed revisionist states as prime movers in the international system. Status-quo states were seen as "reactors," and, accordingly, they played a secondary role in the theory. Once again, Wolfers writes: "Because self-extension almost invariably calls for additional power, countries that seek self-extension tend to be the initiators of power competition and the resort to violence. Herein lies the significant kernel of truth in the idealist theory of aggression."³⁵ For postwar realists, aggressor states trigger recurring balances of power: they must exert initial pressure against the status quo before satisfied Powers will respond, sometimes slowly and reluctantly, with counterpressure. When a reasonable expectation of an external threat is absent, states need not, and usually do not, engage in balancing behavior. When all states embrace the status quo and are unlikely to do otherwise in the near future, the system goes from balance to concert.³⁶ Unlike neorealist theory, postwar realism, because it includes variations in actors' preferences, can account for this kind of system transformation, for example, the Concert of Europe after the Napoleonic wars. (In fact, Waltz's theory cannot explain any behavioral variation at the systemic or unit-level prior to 1945, because his independent variable, system polarity, remained constant, so he claims, throughout the period.)³⁷

For postwar realists, the level of system stability depends on the strength of revisionist and status-quo forces. When a revisionist state or coalition is more powerful than the defenders of the status quo, the system will eventually undergo transformation—only when, how, and to whose advantage remain unknown. When status-quo states dominate, the system is stable.

35. Ibid., 96.

36. This view is consistent with the argument made by Charles A. Kupchan and Clifford A. Kupchan, "A New Concert for Europe," in Graham Allison and Gregory F. Treverton, eds., *Rethinking America's Security: Beyond Cold War to New World Order* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), 251. Also see Kupchan and Kupchan, "Concerts, Collective Security, and the Future of Europe," *International Security* 16, no. 1 (summer 1991): 114–61. For a different view that stresses war-weariness, see Robert Jervis, "From Balance to Concert: A Study of International Security Cooperation," in *Cooperation Under Anarchy*, ed. Kenneth A. Oye (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 58–79.

37. Contrary to the opinion held by most structural realists that the pre-1945 system was always multipolar ($n > 4$), I have argued that the system went from multipolarity to tripolarity during the interwar period. See Randall L. Schweller, "Tripolarity and the Second World War," *International Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (March 1993): 73–103.

It is important to point out that, while postwar realists distinguished between satiated and hungry states, they saw the concept of power politics applying to both haves and have-nots. The centrality of this belief is what separates this brand of realism from Wilsonian idealism or political liberalism. As Carr put it: "It is profoundly misleading to represent the struggle between satisfied and dissatisfied Powers as a struggle between morality on one side and power on the other. It is a clash in which, whatever the moral issue, power politics are equally predominant on both sides."³⁸

NEOREALISM OR STRUCTURAL REALISM

Neorealism's perspective on international politics derives from its two core assumptions: the centrality of autonomous states wishing to survive and the salience of international anarchy. Because world politics takes place within a self-help realm, states must rely on their own resources to protect themselves and further their interests. Whether they desire safety or opportunistic expansion, states are better served by superior, not equal, power. For this reason, neorealists argue, statesmen are usually more concerned with relative advantages than with absolute gains. The problem of uneven gains giving advantage to one side or another makes international cooperation difficult to achieve and hard to maintain.

The neorealist paradigm is built on a fundamental belief in strong links between anarchy, security, and relative gains. Though states are not in a constant state of war, anarchy means that nations must constantly fear enslavement or extinction. Because the consequences of a mistake can be catastrophic, states must be cautious in assessing the intentions of both foes and allies, since today's friend may be tomorrow's enemy.

In its current stress on maximizing security and avoiding relative losses, contemporary realism views the world through the lens of a satisfied, status-quo state, often discussed as if it were besieged by expansionist states. For instance, Waltz's familiar passage about relative gains specifically refers to "states that feel insecure":

38. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, 105. For an insightful discussion on Carr's moral relativism, see Robert G. Kaufman, "E. H. Carr, Winston Churchill, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Us: The Case for Principled Democratic Realism" (paper presented at the *Security Studies* conference on "Realism: Restatements and Renewal," University of Virginia, 6-9 October 1994), 4-13. Cf. Kaufman, "E. H. Carr, Winston Churchill, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Us: The Case for Principled Democratic Realism," *Security Studies* 5, no. 2 (winter 1995/96): 314-53.

When faced with the possibility of cooperating for mutual gain, states that feel insecure must ask how the gain will be divided. They are compelled to ask not "Will both of us gain?" but "Who will gain more?"³⁹

One might say that recent neorealist arguments have mistakenly generalized Waltz's relative-gains statement to apply to all states. Waltz, however, says that anarchy makes every state "feel insecure," and so the question of "who gains more?" is imperative to all of them. It is this endless search for security, not power, that drives the behavior of the neorealist state. Thus, states never voluntarily or knowingly decrease their relative position, even when abiding by this rule means foregoing an opportunity to enhance their wealth, territory, or other power resources in absolute terms.

A related but more subtle neorealist premise is that states are willing to pay high costs and take great risks to secure what they have; but they will only pay a small price and take low risks to improve their positions in the system. Waltz writes:

In anarchy, security is the highest end. Only if survival is assured can states safely seek such other goals as tranquillity, profit, and power....The first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their positions in the system.⁴⁰

In this passage and the one above, Waltz makes a clean break with traditional realism's assumption that states are, at all times, attempting to maximize their relative power. Stressing the point, Waltz says: "In crucial situations...the ultimate concern of states is not for power but for security. This revision is an important one."⁴¹ What does he mean by security? The concept of security is no less murky than that of power. One may define security-maximization in such an expansive way that it becomes virtually indistinguishable from power-maximization, for example, absolute security can only be assured by taking over the world.

Clearly, however, Waltz's use of the term security implies not world domination but rather the minimum power needed to assure the state's survival. His view of the concept is similar to that of Barry Buzan, who defines security as "the ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity."⁴² Security is seen as the most basic of all state interests; the *sine qua non* for all other pursuits.

39. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 105.

40. *Ibid.*, 126.

41. Waltz, "War in Neorealist Theory," 40.

42. Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991), 18-19.

While claiming that security-seeking behavior may be used to describe the primary goal of all states, however, Waltz betrays a distinctly status-quo bias. Only in reference to satisfied countries can it be said that "the first concern of states" is "to maintain their positions in the system." True, Waltz admits that states may seek profit and power; but they must pursue them "safely" and only "if survival is assured."⁴³ In rational-choice terminology, this is known as lexicographic preferences: actors have a hierarchy of objectives and maximize in sequence rather than make trade-offs. According to the neorealist perspective, states pursue secondary and tertiary goals only when the primary objective, survival, is ensured.⁴⁴

Consistent with the neorealist actor's assumed lexicographic preferences, Waltz argues that states do not risk their own security in the pursuit of profit and power. Highlighting this point, Joseph Grieco maintains that, according to realist theory, "it is a defensively positional concern that partners might do better—not an offensively oriented interest in doing better oneself—that drives the relative-gains problem for cooperation."⁴⁵ The problem with this logic, however, is that, while relative power is zero-sum (that is, an increase in the power of one state necessarily means a decrease in the power of other states), "security is intrinsically variable-sum—precisely to what degree is determined by context."⁴⁶ In other words, Grieco's argument about avoiding relative losses and the problem this creates for international cooperation is inconsistent with neorealism's definition of state interest in terms of security (a positive-sum concept) as opposed to power (a zero-sum concept).

Only the strongest of states under the best of circumstances can hope to achieve security through unilateral means. Most often, states seeking security share a common interest in cooperation. This is true, as Robert Jervis argues, when technology and geography favor defensive military strategies

43. Waltz is by no means alone in this view. According to most self-described realists, the primary function of the state is to maintain its territorial and political integrity. See, *inter alia*, Stephen D. Krasner, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 41.

44. For a discussion on neorealism's lexical preferences, see Arthur A. Stein, *Why Nations Cooperate: Circumstance and Choice in International Relations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 90. Rosecrance's "onion" theory of state interests also employs lexical preferences with security as the primary goal. See Richard Rosecrance, *International Relations: Peace or War?* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), chaps. 14–15.

45. Joseph Grieco, "The Relative-Gains Problem for International Cooperation," *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (September 1993), 742 n. 2.

46. Celeste A. Wallander, "International Institutions and Modern Security Strategies," *Problems of Communism* 41, nos. 1–2 (January–April 1992), 45.

and force structures.⁴⁷ It is no less true, and here neorealists have gotten it wrong, when offense has the advantage. Under such conditions, security-seeking states can easily signal their benign intentions by spending heavily on defense to compensate for the advantage of offense. Other states should have no trouble inferring the true intentions of a state willing to engage in this kind of costly signaling. It is thus precisely when offense has the advantage that security-seeking states must cooperate to achieve security, and can easily do so.

Confusion about this point arises because neorealists have mistakenly conceptualized the security dilemma as a Prisoners' Dilemma (PD) rather than a Stag Hunt.⁴⁸ In a PD game, the first choice is to sucker your opponent (you defect while the other player cooperates); in a Stag Hunt, mutual cooperation is both players' first choice. When security is the goal, as in the security dilemma, states will seek to succor, not sucker, their neighbors (the CC payoff). When the goal of one or more states is something other than mutual security, conflict is not only apparent but real; and because it is real, the resulting insecurity cannot be attributed to the security dilemma/spiral model of conflict. States acquire more arms not because they misperceive the security efforts of other benign states but because aggressive states truly wish to harm them. (I return to this argument in the article's final section.)

In an otherwise brilliant essay, Glenn Snyder models, I believe incorrectly, "the primary alliance game" (played in a multipolar system composed of actors of roughly equal military strength) as a prisoners' dilemma/security dilemma rather than stag hunt. Snyder convincingly shows the considerable costs of alliances in terms of treasure and political autonomy, particularly the dual risks of abandonment and entrapment by one's ally. Despite recognizing these costs, however, Snyder argues that all-around abstention from alliances (CC) is merely the second best payoff; forming an alliance while others do not (DC) is the best payoff. This PD preference ordering is all the more puzzling in light of Snyder's first assumption that "no state is aggressive, but none can know the intentions of others."⁴⁹ Given the costs of alignment and the fact that no player is aggressive, all would choose mutual cooperation (CC) over the temptation payoff (DC), if they could be certain of the others' benign intentions. The

47. Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 186-214.

48. See, for example, Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (July 1984): 461-95.

49. *Ibid.*, 462.

primary alliance game, therefore, is best captured by stag hunt, not prisoners' dilemma (DD and CD are third and fourth best choices in both games).

I do not mean to suggest that the interests of security-seeking states are in perfect harmony. Even when they prefer cooperative over unilateral strategies, states engage in a competitive bargaining process to determine where along the Pareto frontier the agreement will lie, that is, how the gains from cooperation will be divided.⁵⁰ Still, traditional realists did not argue that mutual gains would, or should, be divided equally among the partners. Rather than denying the possibility of international cooperation because of the relative-gains problem, traditional realists expected it. How else could they account for the history of alliances and partitions that are, after all, at the core of balance-of-power theory? In keeping with their view of power as the most important factor in world politics, however, traditional realists expected the joint gains from cooperation (for example, the division of spoils among a winning coalition) to be distributed according to the principle: "the biggest dog gets the meatiest bone, and others help themselves in the order of size."⁵¹

The current focus among today's self-described realists on defensive positionality and security-maximizing represents an important departure from the traditional realist view of state interest. "The essence of a state," Treitschke argued, "is firstly power; secondly power; thirdly power."⁵² Likewise, Morgenthau listed as one of six basic principles "the concept of interest defined in terms of power."⁵³ What accounts for this shift in realist theory's emphasis from power to security?

50. See Stephen Krasner, "Global Communications and National Power," *World Politics* 43, no. 3 (April 1991): 336–66; Robert Powell, "Anarchy in International Relations Theory: The Neorealist-Neoliberal Debate," *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (spring 1994): 338–43; Robert Keohane, "Institutional Theory and the Realist Challenge After the Cold War," in *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*, ed. David A. Baldwin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 269–300; Snyder, "The Security Dilemma"; and Wallander, "International Institutions."

51. Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955), 163. Of contemporary realists, only Stephen Krasner and Robert Gilpin consistently incorporate this classical realist principle in their work. Both argue that institutional arrangements reflect the interests of the more powerful actors at the time of their creation. See Krasner, "Global Communications and National Power"; and Gilpin, *War and Change*.

52. Quoted in G. P. Gooch, *Studies in Diplomacy and Statecraft* (London: Longman, Green, 1942), 319.

53. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 5. Morgenthau posited the ubiquity of the "struggle for power in all social relations and on all levels of social organization" as "a necessary and permanent element" of politics (*ibid.*, 33) because "what the one wants for himself, the other already possesses or wants, too"; Morgenthau, *Scientific Man Vs. Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 192. Also see Ashley J. Tellis, "Reconstructing Political Realism: The Long March To Scientific Theory" (paper presented at the *Security Studies* conference on "Realism: Restatements and Renewal," University of Virginia, 6–9 October 1994),

To ensure that neorealist logic remained internally consistent, Waltz and his disciples had to claim that rational states do not seek relative gains so much as avoid relative losses.⁵⁴ If, as neorealists claim, self-help systems induce balancing, not bandwagoning, behavior, such that "a balance, once disrupted, will be restored in one way or another,"⁵⁵ the aggressive pursuit of relative-gains advantages is ultimately self-defeating. Hence, states cannot maximize both their security and relative gains simultaneously. Recognizing this potential contradiction in their theory, neorealists argue that the competition for relative-gains advantages is moderated by the assumed survival imperative of units operating in a self-help system. "In international politics," Waltz declares, "success leads to failure. The excessive accumulation of power by one state or coalition of states elicits the opposition of others."⁵⁶ Rational states thus expand only to achieve security.⁵⁷

Yet, his claim that states do not pursue power and profit at the risk of their own security is not entirely convincing. Even if the system does induce balancing behavior, this means that states are faced with a tradeoff between security and power aggrandizement. It is not clear why they should choose security over expansion. Neorealist logic privileges security over power by assuming that states value what they have more than what they covet. Empirically, however, many large-scale wars were initiated by precisely those states that valued expansion more than their own safety. Contemporary realists are free to assume these states out of existence, but they cannot then claim that their theory explains most great-power behavior in modern history. At a more basic level, the security-before-profit assumption is a curious one because states seeking to augment their territory and resources are, by definition, dissatisfied to some extent with what they currently possess. The key question is, How dissatisfied?

If the state is only somewhat dissatisfied with its current situation, the assumption that it will act with concern for its safety and survival seems reasonable enough. If the state is profoundly dissatisfied with the status quo, however, the assumption makes less sense. Such states often see

26-34. Cf. Tellis, "Reconstructing Political Realism: The Long March To Scientific Theory," *Security Studies* 5, no. 2 (winter 1995/96): 3-106.

54. Indeed, balancing may be too benign a description of other states' reaction to an overly expansionist state; in practice, total destruction of the expander is often the goal of the so-called balancing coalition.

55. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 128. For a different view of what the system induces, see Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning For Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (summer 1994): 72-107.

56. Waltz, "War in Neorealist Theory," 49.

57. Fareed Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay," *International Security* 17, no. 1 (summer 1992), 191.

themselves possessing little of value. Like terminally ill patients, very hungry states are willing to take great risks—even if losing the gamble means extinction—to improve their condition, which they consider intolerable. Uninhibited by the fear of loss, they are free to pursue reckless expansion.⁵⁸

History is replete with examples of states whose first concern was to maximize (or at least significantly increase) their power; who risked their security to improve, not maintain, their positions in the system. Alexander the Great, Rome, the Arabs in the seventh and eighth centuries, Charles V, Philip II, Napoleon I, and Hitler all lusted for universal empire and waged all-or-nothing, apocalyptic wars to attain it.

Yet, not all states whose central goal is to increase their power, let us call them revisionist states, seek world dominion. Some limit their expansionist goals to continental, regional, or local preponderance.⁵⁹ Outstanding historical examples of limited-aims revisionist powers include: in the eighteenth century, Frederick the Great, Louis XV, Peter the Great, Catherine II, and Louis XIV; in the nineteenth century, Metternich, Cavour, Napoleon III, Bismarck; and in the twentieth century, Wilhelm II, Mussolini, Matsuoka, Stalin, and most recently, Khomeini, and Saddam Hussein.

Khomeini's ill-fated decision to fight on in 1985, when Iraq was suing for peace and there was little hope of a wider Iranian victory, only to accept defeat in 1988, illustrates the problem with strictly security-based explanations of state behavior.⁶⁰ Iran fought not for survival but for total victory in a Holy War against the infidels. In the eyes of Shi'ite fundamentalists, God demands Holy Wars and, in such wars, sanctions the gratification of aggression without guilt. Since the infidel, too, benefits from his own death,

58. This point is made by Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 51. Jervis categorizes states according to the costs they will incur to uphold and to change the status quo. This measure yields what Jervis calls the state's basic intention. Also see Charles L. Glaser, "Political Consequences of Military Strategy: Expanding and Refining the Spiral and Deterrence Models," *World Politics* 44, no. 4 (July 1992): 497–538.

59. The best discussion of expansionist states is still Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, chaps. 3 and 9. Morgenthau ranks imperialistic states according to the extent of their goals: unlimited, continental, or localized (*ibid.*, 36–38). He also notes the different functions performed by revisionist and status quo states in the balance of power (*ibid.*, 155–58). For limited-aims strategies, also see John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

60. This point is made by Richard K. Herrmann and Michael P. Fischerkeller, "Beyond the Enemy Image and Spiral Model: Cognitive-Strategic Research after the Cold War," *International Organization* (forthcoming). For a similarly irrational Iraqi strategy, see Richard K. Herrmann, "Coercive Diplomacy and the Crisis over Kuwait, 1990–91," in Alexander L. George and William E. Simons, eds, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Westview, 1994), 229–66.

war is not only a blessing for the world and all nations: it is a form of cultural therapy.⁶¹

It is precisely these states, whose objectives are to maximize their power or greatly increase it, that trigger balancing behavior. Such states do not prefer to join the weaker side, as Waltz claims. To modify the established order, the revisionist coalition must garner preponderant power; "balanced power means the renunciation of their ultimate national goal: a substantial change in the existing order."⁶²

Seeking power and change, revisionist states side with the coalition calling for a New Order, especially when it is stronger than the status-quo coalition. Even status-quo states, for that matter, sometimes bandwagon with the stronger side rather than balancing against it. Consider, for instance, the object of U.S. alliance policy during the years 1946–53. In a narrow sense, U.S. behavior was consistent with neorealist logic: alliances were formed to balance the Sino-Soviet Communist bloc for the purpose of achieving greater security for America and its allies. More generally, however, the aim of U.S. policy was not merely negative and defensive. As Paul Nitze argued at the time, the United States was competing with the Soviet Union and its allies for the positive goal of deciding who would construct a new international order.⁶³ Both sides expected, and at various times were beneficiaries of, "wave of the future"-type bandwagoning. In the end, the collapse of Soviet power in 1989, was accompanied by states in Eastern Europe bandwagoning with the West, contrary to the predictions of balancing theory but entirely consistent with the original bandwagoning logic of America's cold-war strategy.⁶⁴ The general point is that interests, values, ideology, and strategic beliefs are, in many cases, just as important as imbalances of power or threat in determining how states choose sides and why they wage war.

61. For a psychoanalytic view of war as therapy, see Vamik Volkan, *The Need to Have Enemies and Allies: From Clinical Practice to International Relationships* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1988). Volkan discusses the psychoanalytic aspects of the Iran-Iraq war and its connection to the rise of Shi'ite fundamentalism during the Iranian revolution.

62. Wolfers, "The Balance of Power," 126.

63. Paul H. Nitze, "Coalition Policy and the Concept of World Order," in *Alliance Policy in the Cold War*, ed. Arnold Wolfers (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959), 15–30.

64. See Fareed Zakaria, "The Reagan Strategy of Containment," *Political Science Quarterly* 105, no. 3 (fall 1990), 392.

DEFENSIVE POSITIONALISTS AND RATIONAL EGOISTS

NEOREALISM'S CORE tenet is that states under anarchy fear for their survival as sovereign actors. This is what distinguishes modern realism from the competing neoliberal perspective and accounts for the two theories' differing views about the problem of international cooperation. Grieco explains:

Neoliberals argue that they accept the salience of anarchy, which they say means that...states fear being cheated by others. Yet realists argue that anarchy means that states fear not just being cheated but also being dominated or even destroyed by others. As a result, while neoliberals see states as 'rational egoists' interested in their own utility, realists view states as what I have called 'defensive positionalists' interested in achieving and maintaining relative capabilities sufficient to remain secure and independent in the self-help context of international anarchy. In turn, while neoliberals focus on the problem of cheating for cooperation, realists argue that an equally big problem is the fear on the part of some states that others might achieve disproportionate gains and thereby become more domineering friends or even potentially more powerful adversaries. Realists therefore argue that states must solve *both* the cheating and the relative-gains problem in order to achieve cooperation.⁶⁵

As a realist myself, I agree with most of this passage. Yet, I disagree with the view that *all* states are defensive positionalists and not rational egoists. My reasons for this disagreement, however, are entirely different from those put forth by the neoliberal school.⁶⁶

First, and less important for the purposes of this essay, the distinction between relative and absolute gains is somewhat artificial. According to the neorealist position, state A will turn down a cooperative arrangement with

65. Joseph M. Grieco, "Understanding the Problem of International Cooperation: The Limits of Neoliberal Institutionalism and the Future of Realist Theory," in Baldwin, *Neorealism and Neoliberalism*, 303 (emphasis in original).

66. For the neoliberal-neorealist debate on this theme, see Joseph M. Grieco, *Cooperation among Nations: Europe, America, and Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Grieco "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (summer 1988): 485-507; Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Robert Powell, "Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory," *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 4 (December 1991): 1303-20; Duncan Snidal, "Relative Gains and the Pattern of International Cooperation," *American Political Science Review* 83, no. 3 (September 1991): 701-26; Snidal, "International Cooperation Among Relative Gains Maximizers," *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (December 1991): 387-402; Helen Milner, "International Theories of Cooperation among Nations: Strengths and Weaknesses," *World Politics* 44, no. 3 (April 1992): 466-96.

state B in which both sides make gains but B achieves greater gains than A. The logic is that anarchy forces states to be security-, not power-, maximizers. The problem with this argument is: if A accepts B's offer, it might be less secure with respect to B, but by increasing its absolute capabilities A will be in a relatively better position vis-à-vis all outsiders to the agreement.

Moreover, suppose that another state, C, accepts B's offer. A, having refused to cooperate with B, is now relatively less secure with respect to both B and C. In other words, A loses two ways instead of one: it is weaker both in absolute and relative terms. In addition, B might be less likely to seek future cooperation with A, and may even be hostile to A, because it has proven to be a distrusting friend. In short, the realist view of the relative-gains problem is misleading because it does not take into account outside targets of comparison and alternative scenarios, that is, that another state will accept the offer despite the gap in gains advantaging its partner(s).⁶⁷

Second, the assumption of defensive positionality is inconsistent with classical realism's recognition of the importance of power in deciding who gets what in international relations. Suppose revisionist states A, B, and C are partitioning state D, and the relative power ratios of A, B, and C are 4:3:2 respectively. To maintain the proportionate strengths of the three aggressor states, state D should be dismembered in a ratio of 4:3:2 with the strongest state gaining the lion's share of the spoils. According to defensive positionals, however, A, B, and C will only consummate the deal if state D is divided equally among the three states, since this formula avoids gaps in gains advantaging any of the partners. An equal division of the spoils, however, alters the power ratios among the three states to the advantage of the weaker states—not what realism's focus on power would lead us to expect.

In discussing the relative-gains problem, Grieco repeatedly confuses the term "unequal gain" to mean disproportionate gain and relative advantage. He writes, for example: "The main realist statement about the relative-gains problem...makes it clear that for realists, the emergence of the problem is predicated upon the prospect of gains that are unequal and lead to a change in relative position among partners."⁶⁸ Later, in his critique of Duncan Snidal's relative-gains model, Grieco again equates unequal gains with a loss in relative position: "In short, Snidal presents us with the following line of analysis: *by assumption*, states receive equal gains from cooperation or readily

67. While Snidal calls this type of behavior "defensive cooperation," it can just as easily be motivated by offensive concerns. See Snidal, "International Cooperation," 399–401. For a similar argument about why relative-gains concerns may promote cooperation, see Keohane, "Institutional Theory," 277.

68. Grieco, "The Relative-Gains Problem," 730 (emphasis in original).

redress gaps if they arise; therefore, states do not suffer losses in relative position if they cooperate..."⁶⁹

Grieco's confusion on this point echoes the error made by Waltz when he wrote: "If an expected gain is to be divided, say, in the ratio of two to one, one state may use its *disproportionate gain* to implement a policy to damage or destroy the other."⁷⁰ If one of the partners is twice as strong as the other, however, a two-to-one division in favor of the stronger state is not a disproportionate gain; the uneven gain is necessary to maintain the proportionate power ratio between the two states. That is, unequal gains are not disproportionate gains and they do not lead to a change in relative position when they reflect the power ratio among the partners to the agreement. Waltz and Grieco are only correct in equating uneven gains with a disproportionate advantage when, and only when, the partners are equal in size. In agreements among actors of different sizes, it is precisely equal gains that "lead to a change in relative position among partners" to the benefit of the weaker member(s), who make relative gains.

In summary, among actors of asymmetrical capabilities, the terms unequal gains, disproportionate gains, and relative gains are not interchangeable. When a stronger state, A, gains more in absolute terms than a weaker state, B, but in an amount that reflects their relative strengths, the agreement does not produce a relative-gains advantage for A and does not lead to a change in the relative positions of A and B. classical realism's emphasis on relative power as the deciding factor in determining how the gains from cooperation will be distributed takes this into account, Grieco's defensive positionality does not.

Third, who gains more through cooperation is often difficult to discern and may change over time. Consider, for instance, the Soviet Union's long-term agreement to ship oil to its East European satellites in exchange for consumer goods. In the 1950s and 1960s, when oil was cheap and consumer products manufactured in Eastern Europe were competitive with those made in the West, the deal clearly favored the Soviets. During the 1970s and 1980s, however, when the price of oil shot up and the quality of East European goods went down, the satellites got by far the better of the deal. The point is: judgments about gains gaps often depend on one's assessment of the future. For this reason, even if a state is confident that an agreement does not currently contain uneven gains advantaging its partner(s), it cannot be sure that this will hold true in the future.

69. Ibid., 731 (emphasis in original).

70. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 105 (emphasis added).

Finally, and most important to our present concerns, the concept of defensive-positionality is a product of neorealism's status-quo bias. In an early work, Grieco explains the term thus: "[R]ealists find that the major goal of states in any relationship is not to attain the highest possible individual gain or payoff. Instead, *the fundamental goal of states in any relationship is to prevent others from achieving advances in their relative capabilities.*"⁷¹

Guarding against relative losses in power is sound advice for status-quo states, who, by definition, want only to hold what they have and maintain their position in the system. Staying in place, however, is not the principal goal of revisionist states; they want more than what they have in absolute terms and often desire to improve their position in the system. These goals cannot be achieved simply by ensuring that everyone else does not gain relative to them: they must gain relative to others. Toward that end, it makes sense for a revisionist state to enter into cooperative arrangements by which it gains relatively less than its partners. Let me explain.

Suppose revisionist state A makes separate bilateral deals with states B, C, D, and E, whereby A gains 5 utiles, and its partners each gain 7 utiles. In each bilateral deal, A gains 2 utiles less than its partner. Overall, however, A increases its absolute wealth by 20 utiles. More important, A gains a relative advantage of 13 utiles with respect to each partner and 20 utiles vis-à-vis all other states (F, G, H, and so on) that it did not cooperate with. Thus, what A lost in each bilateral deal it more than compensated for in volume. By employing this classic divide-and-conquer strategy,⁷² A enhances both its power and security, except against a hypothetical future coalition of BCDE.⁷³ As long as A's total resources exceed the combined strength of a BCDE coalition by 8 utiles or more, even defensive positionalists should have no problem with A's decision to make this series of uneven deals.

Consider, for instance, the logic of the Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact from Germany's perspective. Esmonde M. Robertson writes:

Virtually all of Lithuania, previously a vital German interest, was to pass to the Soviet sphere of influence. The two remaining Baltic states, and even Finland, were to be included in the Soviet sphere. Bialystok in northern Poland, which was valued for its timber as well as the oil wells east of the San in the south, together with the town of Lemberg, which

71. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation," 498 (emphasis in original).

72. It also describes Anatol Rapoport's TIT-FOR-TAT strategy, which was the winning entry in Robert Axelrod's Computer Prisoner's Dilemma Tournament. See Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984). I am grateful to Sean M. Lynn-Jones for this insight.

73. I am grateful to Jack Snyder for pointing this out.

had a strong Germany minority, were to be handed over to the Russians.... That the Soviet Union should have a free gift of territory conquered for it by the German army and in which Germany had either cultural or economic interests, was regarded as preposterous by the opponents of the regime.... There can be little doubt that for the immediate future Stalin seemed to have gained more from the treaty than Hitler. He could now strengthen the Soviet Union's military economy and raise the striking power of the Red Army. The additional territories in the west moreover made it possible for him... to adopt a strategy of defense in depth.⁷⁴

The far-reaching concessions made by Hitler in the Nazi-Soviet pact are inconsistent with neorealism's central claim that states seek relative, not absolute, gains. If ever there was an easy case for confirming the hypothesis that concern for relative gains inhibits cooperation, this was it: two powerful, greedy, untrustworthy states, in close geographic proximity to one another, whose regimes had recently pilloried each other as the negation of everything for which the other stood. For these reasons, even if the agreement had not contained gaps in gains advantaging the Soviet Union, most realists would not have predicted cooperation between these two states.

By allowing the Soviets to make gains relative to Germany, Hitler defied neorealist logic: he decreased Germany's security, at least over the short run. This is not surprising, however, since Hitler's actions were not designed to enhance Germany's security. He viewed the Reich's possessions as meager, and so would risk very little to protect them. Hitler's foreign policy was driven instead by his obsession to become master of Europe. To change the status quo for Germany, Hitler was willing to pay high costs and take great risks. If this meant that deals had to be struck by which Germany gained relatively less than its partners in crime, so be it. Of course, Hitler understood that these gaps in gains benefiting Germany's partners carried the risk of decreasing the Reich's security. States, however, do not wage apocalyptic wars if they are unwilling to put their security—indeed, their survival—at risk. As Hillgruber put it, “the sentence printed in bold-face letters in *Mein Kampf*, ‘Germany will either be a world power or there will be no Germany’, was, quite literally, the crux of Hitler’s program.”⁷⁵

74. Esmonde M. Robertson, “German Mobilization Preparations and the Treaties Between Germany and the Soviet Union of August and September 1939,” in *Paths to War: New Essays on the Origins of the Second World War*, ed. Robert Boyce and Esmonde M. Robertson (New York: St. Martin's, 1989), 253–54.

75. Andreas Hillgruber, *Germany and the Two World Wars*, trans. William C. Kirby (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 50.

The Nazi-Soviet pact also highlights the problem, noted earlier, of discerning who gains more. When viewed against the larger canvas of great-power relations, Hitler, not Stalin, appears to have gotten the better of the deal. After all, the pact enabled Germany to win in the West, then turn East—fighting France and Russia separately, rather than simultaneously.⁷⁶ Confident that Germany would crush the West, Hitler was, as James Morrow recently put it, “only too happy to give Stalin a free hand in the Baltic states and slices of Poland and Romania as the price for Soviet nonintervention.”⁷⁷ Moreover, the economic clauses of the Nazi-Soviet pact favored Germany. Russia supplied the Reich with critical raw materials on extremely generous terms, while the German industrial goods which the Soviets demanded in exchange were delivered much more slowly.⁷⁸ Yet, the question of who gained more, if anyone, from the pact was settled only after the quick defeat of France, which few observers predicted in 1939.

In summary, the goal of revisionist states fits the neoliberal view of states as rational egoists, that is, actors who wish to maximize their individual absolute gains and are indifferent to the gains made by others. They are, however, rational egoists for very different reasons than those put forth by the neoliberal school. As atomistic actors, revisionist states are power-maximizers not, as neorealists assume, security-maximizers. This is especially true with regard to unlimited revisionist states bent on expansion and willing to take great risks to achieve it.⁷⁹ In a recent example, the Bosnian Serb foreign minister, Aleksa Buha, rejected the Vance-Owen peace plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina, saying: “For us Serbs, it is better to commit collective suicide than to live with others any longer.”⁸⁰

76. Of course, Stalin would not have made the deal had he not expected France and Britain ultimately to defeat Germany in a war of attrition; nor would Hitler have done so had he not expected the opposite to occur.

77. James D. Morrow, “Arms Versus Allies: Tradeoffs in the Search For Security,” *International Organization* 47, no. 2 (spring 1993), 230.

78. David Kaiser, *Economic Diplomacy and the Origins of the Second World War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 263–73. Also see Kaiser, “Germany, ‘Domestic Crisis’ and War in 1939,” *Past and Present* 122 (February 1989): 202–3.

79. My conceptualization of status-quo and revisionist interests fits nicely with Fareed Zakaria’s discussion of the neorealist assumption of “defensive-realism” (of which he is critical) and his alternative theoretical assumption of “influence-maximizing” behavior. See Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics,” 194 n. 43. I agree with Zakaria’s critique of defensive realism, but his “influence-maximizing” assumption seems just as unnecessarily limiting as the security-maximizing one he seeks to replace. A more useful approach, I believe, is to model the full range of state interest according to the value states place on the things they covet relative to what they currently possess. See Schweller, “Bandwagoning For Profit,” 99–104.

80. Quoted in Kemal Kurspahic, “Serbian Sincerity, And Ours,” *New York Times*, 7 May 1993, A31.

In practice, aggressor states have often sought to expand for reasons other than mere survival, for example, greed, divine right, manifest destiny, and revenge. In most cases, the urge for expansion and the survival instinct are incompatible. Russian and American expansion to continental size is a rare exceptions to this rule. For this reason, "defensive realists" are correct to point out that unlimited-aims expansion is ultimately self-defeating.⁸¹ They are wrong to ignore the objectives of aggressors, which they treat as domestically-driven exceptions to the demands imposed by the system.⁸² Because the threat of nonsecurity expansion is essential to the realist paradigm, the power-maximizing goals of revisionist states must be recognized along with the security-maximizing objectives of status-quo states.

External threats—potential, imagined, or real—drive the realist model. It is surprising, therefore, that revisionist states are scarcely mentioned by contemporary neorealists. Instead, neorealists discuss threats as if they came from nature (the hand of God), not from other states in the international system. Neorealism does not distinguish between the expansionist goals of revisionist states and the peaceful objectives of status-quo states. This is intentional: the theory's parsimony is achieved by assuming that states behave as billiard balls, all of the same color and weight.⁸³ By contrast, traditional realists went to great lengths to distinguish between satiated and hungry states and to rank the great powers according to their relative capabilities (sometimes classifying them as first-, second-, or third-tier great powers).

Waltz distances himself from the power-maximizing assumption of traditional realism by claiming that "a balance of power system works whether we find states seeking only the minimum of power needed for security or whether some of them strive for domination."⁸⁴ If this were true, balancing behavior would occur even when all states are status-quo powers. What, then, triggers balancing behavior? Among status-quo states, there is no reason to expect imbalances of threat to emerge nor imbalances of power to

81. For a defensive-realist analysis of domestically driven overexpansion, see Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

82. As Zakaria writes, defensive realism does not attribute "expansion to systemic incentives. The international system pressures states towards moderate behavior only; anything else must be explained at some other level of analysis because it cannot be a rational response to the international environment." Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics," 192.

83. By weight, I mean that Waltz does not differentiate among poles according to differences in their relative capabilities. All great powers count as one pole, and the number of poles determines the structure of the system.

84. Kenneth N. Waltz, "Reflections on *Theory of International Politics*," in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 334.

act as a catalyst driving balancing behavior. By definition, all states are satisfied with the status quo.

Returning to Waltz's statement, one might argue that a balance-of-power system works whether all states seek domination or some of them strive for the minimum of power needed for security. This statement, however, is similarly simplistic and not empirically useful. There are few examples of a balance-of-power system operating effectively when no state supported the status-quo order.

In practice, balance-of-power systems have always involved a mix of both revisionist and status-quo states. This is because, unless some states seek self-preservation, there is little reason to expect that a sufficient number of them will ally to check the accumulation of threatening power. Conversely, if all states seek the minimum of power needed for security, threats sufficient to provoke balancing behavior will not arise in the first place.

NEOREALISM AND THE SECURITY DILEMMA

IN RESPONSE TO MY argument that balancing will not occur in a system comprised of all security-seeking actors, neorealists would counter with their ace in the hole: the security dilemma. The possibility that force may be used to settle disputes, even among peaceful, status-quo powers means that states cannot escape the security dilemma—an increase in one state's security decreases the security of others. Insecurity and the use of force, realists argue, are enduring attributes of the self-help international system. Therefore, as Robert Jervis points out, when offense has the advantage over defense in military technology, "status-quo powers must then act like aggressors; the fact that they would gladly agree to forego the opportunity for expansion in return for guarantees for their security has no implications for their behavior."⁸⁵

For Jervis, the severity of the security dilemma is determined by two factors: whether offense or defense has the advantage and whether an offensive posture is distinguishable from a defensive one.⁸⁶ For Waltz, how-

85. Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," 169.

86. In the security literature, the offensive/defensive balance of military technology has been variously defined in terms of, the attack/defense ratios, the defeat of enemy armed forces, the protection of population, the incentive to strike first, tactical mobility, the characteristics of armaments, and the relative resources expended on the offense and the defense. See Jack S. Levy, "The Offensive/Defensive Balance of Military Technology: A Theoretical and Historical Analysis," *International Studies Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (June 1984): 219-38. For a useful literature review, also see Stephen D. Biddle, "The State of Knowledge on the De-

ever, the intensity of the security dilemma is a constant; stability is a function not of the offensive/defensive balance so much as the polarity of the system: "two can deal with the dilemma better than three or more."⁸⁷ Waltz describes the security dilemma as a "condition in which states, *unsure of one another's intentions*, arm for the sake of security and in doing so set a vicious circle in motion. *Having armed for the sake of security*, states feel less secure and buy more arms because the means to anyone's security is a threat to someone else who in turn responds by arming."⁸⁸

Although its intensity does not vary in Waltz's model, the concept of the security dilemma is crucial to his argument because it means that even peaceful states, "having armed for the sake of security," cannot avoid threatening each other. The hypothesized spiral effect created by states arming for security is used to explain why a state of war exists—and why war is always possible—among actors seeking nothing more than security. If this is true, then Waltz is correct to say that balancing behavior will prevail in an anarchic order populated by units wishing to survive.

Under scrutiny, however, the logic falls apart. First, Waltz relies not on structure but rather on the uncertainty of intentions to explain why states, having armed for security, necessarily threaten each other. Waltz might respond that states that feel insecure may act aggressively even if they are not in fact aggressive. The crucial point, however, is that the security dilemma is *always* apparent, not real. If states are arming for something other than security—that is, if aggressors do in fact exist—then it is no longer a *security* dilemma but rather an example of a state or coalition mobilizing for the purpose of expansion and the targets of that aggression responding by acquiring arms and forming alliances to defend themselves. Indeed, Glenn Snyder makes this very important point (disclaimer?) in his discussion of the security dilemma and alliance politics: "Uncertainty about the aims of others is inherent in structural anarchy. If a state clearly reveals itself as expansionist, however, the alliance that forms against it is not self defeating as in the prisoners' dilemma (security dilemma) model."⁸⁹ That is, if an expansionist state exists, there is no security dilemma/spiral effect. Moreover, if all states are relatively sure that none seeks expansion, then the security dilemma similarly fades away. It is only the misplaced fear that others harbor aggressive designs that drives the security dilemma.

terminants of Offensiveness and Defensiveness in Conventional Ground Forces," *IDA Paper P-2295* (Alexandria, Virginia: Institute for Defense Analyses, September 1989).

87. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 187.

88. *Ibid.*, 186 (emphasis added).

89. Unfortunately, this crucial point is buried in a footnote. See Snyder, "The Security Dilemma," 462 n. 2.

In their reliance on the assumption of imperfect information to explain conflict and balancing behavior, neorealists (read: Waltz and his students) violate realism's most basic tenet that conflicts of interest among states are genuine rather than the result of misunderstanding and misperception.⁹⁰ Moreover, the notion that states would adopt aggressive policies to acquire security simply does not square with the thrust of Waltz's argument, namely, that expansion is self-defeating because the system induces balancing behavior. In Waltz's scheme, such behavior is irrational.

Second, Waltz does not say why, in the absence of any history of aggressors, states would arm for security or, for that matter, any other reason. Why would security-seeking states invest in any weapons, much less offensive ones, in the first place? Third, if states can manipulate the offensive-defensive character of their forces in order to make their intentions known, then the security dilemma vanishes in a system composed of all status-quo states. It is in the self-interest of peaceful states to build and deploy forces and develop doctrines that emphasize their benign intentions and that create no incentives to strike first. Regarding conventional land forces, for example, such states could forego tactical mobility in favor of fixed fortifications; as for nuclear forces, they could deploy inaccurate, mobile, single-warhead ballistic missiles with little or no hard-target kill capability.

Neorealists might counterargue that effective conventional deterrence sometimes requires a strong counteroffensive capability. This is true, of course, but deterrence theory is not rooted in the security dilemma.⁹¹ For deterrence to be rational, there must be a reasonable probability, not just a remote possibility, of danger.⁹² For this reason, deterrence theory does not predict that the United States will acquire offensive weapons to deter Canada or Britain, unless their current intentions undergo a drastic change. The threat must be real, not imagined. Otherwise, we are once again in the realm of misperception and the spiral model of conflict.

Another possible counterargument is that military organizations favor offense over defense.⁹³ This, too, would not salvage neorealism, since theories of bureaucratic politics reside in the second image. Finally, neorealists might embrace a systemic theory of technological determinism. I am unaware, however, of any realist who explicitly makes this rather dubious

90. I am grateful to Stephen R. Rock for this crucial insight.

91. See Jervis's discussion of deterrence and the spiral model, in Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, chap. 3.

92. Keohane makes a similar point about the distinction between probability and mere possibilities in expected utility models with uncertainty. See Keohane, "Institutional Theory," 282-83.

93. See, for example, Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*.

case, though I believe it is implicit in most offense/defense, security-dilemma arguments.

At bottom, the concept of the security dilemma in international politics rests on the assumption that some states are misperceived to be either currently harboring aggressive designs, or that they may become aggressive in the future. In a hypothetical world in which states are known to be status quo and cannot be otherwise in the future, it would make no sense to say that offensive advantage dictates "that the only route to security lies through expansion."⁹⁴ States that are dissatisfied with the territory they possess, even if for defensive reasons, are, by definition, revisionist, not status quo, powers. In a world without aggressors, in which all states are happy with what they currently have and are expected to remain so in the future, how can a state be dissatisfied with the territory under its control for defensive reasons? When all states support the status quo, even the weakest among them will feel secure with the territory and capabilities it possesses.

IN COLD BLOOD

PREDATORY STATES motivated by expansion and absolute gains, not security and the fear of relative losses, are the prime movers of neorealist theory. Without some possibility of their existence, the security dilemma melts away, as do most concepts associated with contemporary realism. Yet, to introduce actual aggressors into the model also destroys the security dilemma. When revisionist states are present, they will correctly interpret the security measures of others as defense against themselves, and the spiral model never gets started.⁹⁵

A model based on the assumption that the central concern of states is not for power but for security, since it must rely on uncertainty to explain conflict, is inconsistent with both traditional and structural realism. Without the unit-level assumption that some states seek or will seek nonsecurity expansion, anarchy among units wishing to survive does not mean that war is always possible; and states that do not pursue security will not be punished by the system.

94. Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," 169.

95. I am extremely grateful to Glenn H. Snyder for this counterintuitive insight, among others. It should be noted that Snyder disagrees with the central argument of the paper because it fails, in his words, "to see the crucial importance of *uncertainty* and *incomplete information* in explaining the behavior of states in anarchy."

The failure of contemporary realists to accept this logic has forced them to resort to nonrational factors (for example, organizational complexity, perceptions, accidents, strategic myths, and structural constraints on rationality) to explain general wars among the major powers. Yet, war is seldom the result of decision-making blunders, mechanical accidents, situational constraints, or misunderstandings;⁹⁶ and no war has been caused solely by offensive military technology.⁹⁷

War is almost always intended by someone. Throughout history it has been decided upon in cold blood not for reasons of self-preservation but for the purpose of greedy expansion at the expense of others' security, prestige, and power. "What was so often unintentional about war," Blainey points out, "was not the decision to fight but the outcome of the fighting."⁹⁸ To be internally consistent, realist theory must be based on the assumption that some states seek nonsecurity expansion or that there is good chance that they will become aggressive in the future. Without this assumption, there is no relative gains problem for cooperation under anarchy.

The current world is, in fact, one in which all great powers are known to be status-quo states.⁹⁹ Consequently, there is little threat of major-power

96. An inadvertent war is defined as one "neither side wanted or expected at the outset of the crisis." Alexander George, "Findings and Recommendations," in *Avoiding War: Problems of Crisis Management*, ed. Alexander George (Boulder: Westview, 1991), 545. In contrast, accidental war is defined as "war that arises without choice, either rational or irrational, or that follows rationally from an act that was undertaken without choice." Edward Rhodes, *Power and MADness: The Logic of Nuclear Coercion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 80. The concept of accidental war implies uncontrollable escalation triggered by reckless operating tactics and/or technical failure of complex but poorly designed command and control systems. For recent discussions on inadvertent escalation and accidental war, see Scott D. Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation: Organization Theory, Deterrence Theory, and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons," *International Security* 18, no. 4 (spring 1994): 58–107; Barry Posen, *Inadvertent Escalation: Conventional War and Nuclear Risks* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Bruce G. Blair, *The Logic of Accidental Nuclear War* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1993); and Jeffrey W. Legro, "Military Culture and Inadvertent Escalation in World War II," *International Security* 18, no. 4 (spring 1994): 108–42. For earlier works, see Paul Bracken, *The Command and Control of Nuclear Forces* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); and John Phelps, Bruce Russett, Matthew Sands, and Charles Schwartz, eds., *Studies on Accidental War* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Defense Analyses, 1963).

97. The conventional view of the First World War as unintended and driven by situational constraints is challenged by Marc Trachtenberg, "The Meaning of Mobilization in 1914," *International Security* 15, no. 3 (1990/91): 120–50.

98. Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War* (New York: Free Press, 1973), 144. Also see Michael Howard, *The Causes of War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 12; Joseph S. Nye Jr., "Old Wars and Future Wars: Causation and Prevention," in Rotberg and Rabb, *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars*, 11–12; and Richard K. Betts, "Systems for Peace or Causes of War? Collective Security, Arms Control, and the New Europe," *International Security* 17, no. 1 (summer 1992), 39.

99. One could argue that Russia's current satisfaction with the status quo is extremely tenuous. Russia has lost two layers of empire, and so, the argument goes, any internal con-

war in the foreseeable future. Agreeing with this view, but for other reasons, Jervis opines, "war among the developed states is extremely unlikely because its costs have greatly increased, the gains it could bring have decreased, especially compared to the alternative routes to those goals, and the values states seek have altered."¹⁰⁰

War among the developed states, however, is no more costly today than during the cold war era. Indeed, the perception of great-power war as costly has been dominant since the First World War. Likewise, the gains from war decreased well before the end of the cold war. Nothing has changed to make today's "international politics among the developed nations...qualitatively different from what history has made familiar"¹⁰¹ except for "the values states seek," specifically, the intentions of the former Soviet Union. Russia still possesses formidable military power, and if Russian hardliners gain control once again, observers who now claim that the world is multipolar or unipolar, will quickly recognize that the system remains bipolar in terms of military capabilities. Waltz himself claims that the system is still bipolar.¹⁰² In so doing, however, he admits that his structural theory cannot account for the end of the cold war. The long peace endures, he now contends, because each superpower possesses nuclear weapons, by his definition a unit-level capability.¹⁰³ Whither bipolar stability?

Ironically, the current international system closely approximates Waltz's assumption that, for his theory to work, all great powers need seek nothing more than survival. Insofar as this is true, however, the main insights of his theory, which I have argued cannot be logically deduced from this assumption, have become largely irrelevant. The system is stable because of the actors' benign intentions, not because of a change in its structure. Today we speak of a new world order characterized by great-power cooperation because all of the developed states are satisfied powers. While this happy state of affairs may be short-lived, a change for the worse would further underscore the importance of bringing the interests of states back into the fold of realist theory.

vulsion could make irredentism a popular policy. While I think this scenario is very unlikely, recent history shows that anything is possible. I am grateful to Richard Betts for pointing this out.

100. Robert Jervis, "The Future of World Politics: Will It Resemble the Past?" *International Security* 16, no. 3 (winter 1991/92): 53-54.

101. *Ibid.*, 55.

102. Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security* 18, no. 2 (fall 1993): 44-79.

103. For this change in Waltz's argument, see Richard Ned Lebow, "The Long Peace, the End of the Cold War, and the Failure of Realism," *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (spring 1994): 252-59.